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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

The Message of Jesus to Men of Wealth.

A Tract for the Times.

Rev. George D. Herron.

Published by
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. · . BY THE SAME AUTHOR . · .

The Larger Christ. By Rev. George D. Herron. . . . *In Press.*

"The discovery of Christ is the need of our times. The search for some law of justice between man and man, the search for remedies for social ills, is essentially a search after Christ. In a larger sense, in its widest and most complex spheres of activity, the world has yet to find Christ. It is the imperative duty of the day that Christ's disciples shall discover, and reveal Him in larger relations to human society."

New York. Fleming H. Revell Co. Chicago.

THE

MESSAGE OF JESUS

To Men of Wealth.

BY

REV. GEORGE D. HERRON.

INTRODUCTION BY REV. JOSIAH STRONG, D. D.,
AUTHOR OF "OUR COUNTRY."

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INTRODUCTION.

Among the notable signs of the times is what might be called, for lack of a better term, the *intellectual* supremacy of Jesus Christ. He has always commanded the conscience even when the will has rebelled. For nineteen hundred years men have acknowledged Him to be the loftiest exemplar of all moral excellence even though they refused to follow in His footsteps. Men have willingly conceded to Him the deepest spiritual insight and the highest authority touching religious truth, even though they deemed the Sermon on the Mount inapplicable to practical life. They are now beginning to see that His words contain the solution of the great problems of this life, as well as of that which is to come; that He is the Saviour of society no less than of individual souls; that to disregard His teachings is poor statesmanship and bad political economy as well as bad morals and irreligion.

Property is one of the central facts of civilization. Its production, transportation and distribution, engage men's industries; its acquisition is the common object of endeavor; the love of it is the root of all evil. It would have been strange indeed if the Great Teacher had had little or nothing to say concerning so great a factor in human life. As a matter of fact he had very much to say concerning it, not only by way of illustration, but also touching the fundamental principles of its use. "*The Message of Jesus to Men of Wealth*," is therefore a vital theme. No one is competent to interpret or discuss that message who is not in close *spiritual* fellowship with the Great Teacher, for He did not divide His teachings into temporal and spiritual any more than He separated duties into secular and sacred. We sus-

pect that truth is one as God is, that the whole of any one truth is all truth, and that all truths are spiritual as all duties are sacred.

The writer of "*The Message of Jesus to Men of Wealth*," was well fitted for his task. He is a man to whom the truths which we call spiritual are profoundly and supremely real. He has a passion to take of the things of God and show them to his fellow-men. He has a deep insight into the meaning of the cross because he has had a deep experience of its power, and holds with a firm faith that the cross, which is the heart of the gospel, is the power of God unto the salvation not only of *men* but of *man*.

It is no wonder that Mr. Herron's paper attracted attention when read before the Congregational Club of Minnesota. A secular paper said of it: "Each sentence was an acorn wherein a forest was already pent up. No one could have listened to the essay, delivered as it was with an earnestness burning at the white heat without feeling that it was the result of months and years of mental toil and moral and spiritual travail." And an editorial of the *Christian Union* in which it was first published, says: "It is electric, and needs not the impassioned utterance of the speaker to give it emphasis. It flashes with a fire that is internal, and contains even more than it imparts." It is now published in a more permanent and convenient form at the request of many leaders of Christian thought and is worthy of the widest circulation.

JOSIAH STRONG.

NEW YORK.

THE MESSAGE OF JESUS

To Men of Wealth.

I AM appointed to present to you, this evening, what I understand to be the message of Jesus to men of wealth, and to apply that message to the problems of society which the best thought and truest sympathy of our times are reaching out to solve. I assume, in what I shall say, that I am addressing an audience of Christ's disciples.

In their essence, the social problems of to-day are not different from those of yesterday; they are as old as society itself. They date back to the infancy of the race, when sin couched at the door of Adam's eldest son, to spring up within his heart as

hatred for his younger brother. Ever since Cain—whom President Hitchcock calls "that first godless political economist"—killed his brother Abel, the associability of human beings for good and common ends has been a problem; a problem, be it kept in mind, born in a heart of covetousness, and set by the hand of hate for the race to solve. Cain's murder of his brother Abel was the first bald, brutal assertion of self-interest as the law of human life—an assertion always potential with murder; an assertion whose acceptance involves the triumph of the brute man over the God-imaged man; an assertion which the divine heart of humanity has always denied; a theory of society which will be remembered as a frightful dream of the past when the race recovers its moral sanity. Cain's hands were the first to grasp and wield competition as the weapon of progress; a weapon from which no economic theorists have ever been able to wash the blood of human suffering. When Cain replied to God, "Am I

my brother's keeper?" he stated the question to which all past and present problems of man's earthly existence are reducible. The search for the final and comprehensive answer to Cain's question has been the race's sacred sorrow; and obedience to such an answer would carry in it the perfect solvent of all the problems that perplex the minds and hearts of men.

The Dream of the Ages.

History and prophecy have always pointed toward a time of industrial peace and social brotherhood. The most unselfish aspirations of the noblest men have been along the line of the social unity of the race. About this hope statesmen and philosophers have woven their sublimest theories of society and government. It has been the highest inspiration of poetry. It is the end toward which Moses and Plato looked. It is the lofty strain borne along from prophet to prophet through Israel's glory and shame. Outside of Biblical prophecy there

is no purer expression of this ancient hope than in John Stuart Mill's autobiography: "I yet looked forward," he says, "to a time . . . . when the division of the produce of labor, instead of depending, as in so great a degree it now does, on the accident of birth, will be made by an acknowledged principle of justice; and when it will no longer be, or be thought to be, impossible for human beings to exert themselves strenuously in procuring benefits which are not to be exclusively their own, but to be shared by society to which they belong."

And yet, with all the history and prophecy, the schools and temples, the philosophy and poetry, the governments and civilizations, the day of brotherhood seems no nearer than generations ago. The hope grows faint with age. The problems of society are still unsolved.

The question of Cain is the master question of our age. It has grown articulate with the greed and cruelty of history. It threatens our American day and nation with

the crisis of the centuries. It must be answered; and answered with justice and righteousness. The blood of Abel cries out through toiling millions. The expectation of the poor shall not forever perish in hopeless toiling and longing for better days. As John Ruskin says, "There are voices of battle and famine through all the earth, which must be heard some day, whoever keeps silence." No arrogant reply as to the historic and legal rights of private and corporate property will silence these voices.

Civilization Cannot Fulfill the Dreams of Social Justice.

The natural development of our civilization will not unfold the solution of our industrial problems. When we watch the mammoth enginery of this modern civilization through the assurances of a partisan press, or the mercenary declamation of the politician who estimates the moral stupidity of the people by his own, the movements of its great wheels seem wonderfully safe and per-

fect; but when we, in our sober, honest, thoughtful moments, view it through the sympathies and purposes of the divine Man of Sorrows, we see torn, bleeding, mangled, sorrowing, famishing multitudes beneath the wheels of its remorseless enginery; we see that greed and not love is the power that moves our civilization; we see politics, commerce, and the social club moving on the economic assumption that selfishness is the only considerable social force, and assuming that civilization can advance only through the equal balancing of warring, selfish interests; we see men valuing brute cunning and the low instinct of shrewdness more than whiteness of soul.

A civilization based on self-interest, and securing itself through competition, has no power within itself to secure justice. We speak to pitiless forces when we appeal to its processes to right the wrongs and inequalities of society. The world is not to be saved by civilization. It is civilization that needs saving. A civilization basing itself

upon self-interest has a more dangerous foundation than dynamite. It is built upon falsehood. It carries in it the elements of anarchy because it has no ground in moral realities. It is atheistic because it treats God and his righteousness as external to itself. It is nihilistic because it thrives on destruction. It is a civilization which Bishop Huntington declares "leads by a sure course to barbarism." It is a civilization under whose procession John Stuart Mill affirms the very idea of "justice, or any proportionality between success and merit, or between success and exertion," to be "so chimerical as to be relegated to the region of romance." The end to which the civilization of the present tends is material, and not moral; it tends to the enslavement of society and the smothering of its highest life. Civilization is the flower of the character of the dominant classes; it is an effect more than a cause; its forces originate in character; its activities are the expression of the people's being. No civilization can be

made righteous, or can make itself righteous, by any restraints or regulations external to itself. A righteous civilization can have no other source than the inward righteousness of those who originate and control its forces.

The Impotency of Abstract Truth.

There is no power in abstract truth, either economic, ethical, or theological, to cure our social ills. Economic laws naturally deal with things external to man's being; with principles which will be accepted or rejected according to inward forces of character which they can obey, but cannot control. Ethical truth taught to an unspiritualized race, or generation, or civilization, is a childish waste of time and strength. There are no ethics apart from religion. The springs of human virtue are all in God. There is no ethical truth other than the expression of the will of God. Socrates, Plato and Shakespeare seem to have understood this better than some of us who teach our fellow-men to-day. Nearly all the warnings of the Old and New Testa-

ment, which we so self-assuringly address to so-called unbelievers, were addressed in the first place to those who presumed themselves to be already in the kingdom of God; to those in the temple services and the churches. The ethical instructions of Jesus and the Apostles were all based upon and developed from the cross. Theological truth has repeatedly shown its barrenness of the fruit of righteousness. The darkest crimes of history have been committed by the conservators of religion. A jealousy for theological truth often accompanies a hatred of duty. The Pharisees were so orthodox that they crucified Christ for heresy. They possessed the oracles of God. Yet the truth did not save them from greedy, heartless, malignant, hypocritical lives. A slavish and enslaving conservatism has always joined hands with an indifferent worldlyism for the crucifixion of God's perennial revelations of incarnate truth. I suspect the devil knows more truth than any of us; and he is all the more devilish for know-

ing it. Truth that does not strike its roots in love is a curse; and the truer the truth the more accursed its results. There is a pregnant thought, which the Church has yet to learn, in a saying of Mozoomdar's in his "Oriental Christ": "Unless our creeds fertilize the world, and our lives furnish meat and drink to mankind, the curse uttered on barrenness will descend on us."

Hope, Not in the State.

We cannot look to the State to solve our social woes and grant our social hopes. All the great political prophets, from Moses to Milton, and from Milton to Sumner and Mulford, recognize that the people are the makers of the State rather than the State the makers of the people. The State is the expression of the highest common thought of the people; it is the work of the people's faith. Hegel says "the State is the realization of the moral idea" of the people. The people must be righteous before the State can be righteous. If we agree with Milton

that the State "ought to be but as one huge Christian personage, one mighty growth or stature of an honest man," then the Christian State must be the offspring of a Christian people. If we regard the State, with Sumner, as a grand moral institution, it must be moral because the people build it with their moral thought and purpose. The best and strongest institutions have been powerless to restrain people whose moral conceptions they did not embody. The Mosaic legislation was never fully enforced. Roman law could find no expression in the thought and life of later Rome. Alfred the Great incorporated the Ten Commandments and Golden Rule in the early English constitution, but they are yet far from being the laws of English industrial and social life. Laws written on tables of stone and printed in statute books are but the playthings of politicians if they are not written in people's hearts. Laws cannot make men unselfish. They can restrain ; but all legal righteousness is but temporary. Police righteousness is

not divine righteousness. Force-justice is unreal justice. The State cannot, by any possible process, make the rich man unselfish, or the poor man thrifty. The State cannot establish justice and righteousness on the earth; but justice and righteousness must establish the State. Except the State be born again, it cannot see the Kingdom of God.

"The Heart Disease of Society."

The heart of all our social disputes is what Mulford calls "the crude assertion of an enlightened self-interest as a law of human activity." This assertion is the essence of the gospel which Professor Sumner proclaims from his chair in a great Christian university. Social classes, he decides, owe each other nothing; benevolence is simply barter, and "the yearning after equality the offspring of envy and covetousness." This is a gospel which would have caused the proclaimer to be mobbed in the streets of Athens in the days of Pericles; a gospel

which would have astounded Moses, and seemed ancient and barbarous to Abraham. The supremacy of the law of self-interest is the conclusion of Herbert Spencer's materialistic philosophy; and of the wretched pessimism of Hartmann and Schopenhauer. It is the principle upon which Cain slew his brother. It was the seductive whisper of the serpent in Eve's ear. It is the principle upon which crime is committed. It is the principle upon which the capitalist acts who treats labor as no more than a commodity subject to the lowest market rate and the law of supply and demand. It is the principle upon which railroads are bonded and bankrupted for private ends. It is the law by which the New England deacon chattels his money upon the Dakota farmer's meager possessions at a usurious and impoverishing rate of interest—a deed which will not be obscured from the eyes of a just God by the endowment of a chair in a denominational college. It is the principle upon which a Chicago financier proceeds with no more

moral justification than the highwayman's robbery of an express train, to "corner" the pork market, and thus force from the hungry mouths of toiling families a million and a half of dollars into his private treasury —a deed for which the giving of some thousands to found city missions and orphans' homes will be no atonement in the reckoning of the God who judges the world in righteousness and not by the ethics of the stock exchange. The law of self-interest is the eternal falsehood which mothers all social and private woes; for sin is pure individualism—the assertion of self against God and humanity.

The Divine Remedy.

God's answer to Cain's question, God's solvent of the social problems of our day, is the cross. And the cross is more than an historic event. It is the law by which God acts, and expects men to act. It is the creed of God which will never be revised. It is the principle upon which creation and

history proceed. It was the assertion intensified which God has been making through all history, of self-sacrifice as the law of human development and achievement. Self-sacrifice is the law which God asserts in Christ over against the law of self-interest which Satan asserts in Cain. The trial in progress is Christ *versus* Cain. The decision to which the times are hastening us is, Shall Christ or Cain reign in our American civilization? And well may the heavens await our decision in silent and awful wonder; for we are deciding the destiny of the earth!

The Message of Jesus.

The message of Jesus to every man, rich or poor, weak or strong, ignorant or wise, is the cross. In whatsoever form he puts it, whether in parable or principle, miracle or command, the cross is the heart of every message: not a cross, but his cross—the cross of absolute self-renunciation which he carried in his heart. In Christ's teachings the cross was something else than an arbi-

trary contrivance for populating heaven. The Gospel of our Lord knows of no reconciliation *by* the cross that does not begin with a reconciliation to the cross. Being reconciled *to* God has a vaster meaning than being reconciled to the comfortable reception of certain benefits from God's hand. It means the apprehension of the law of God's life as the law of our lives. And sacrifice is the law of the life of God. The creation involved an infinite sacrifice. Out of the travail of God humanity was born. Before earth's sinning, sorrowing ages began, with infinite sorrow God consented within himself to their beginning. The sorrow of Gethsemane was in God's heart before he breathed life into man; and the suffering of the cross continues in the Father-heart till sin vanishes from the hearts of his children.

The moral progress of the race has been through sacrifice. It is the divine order of culture. The race's divinest types are alwas dying that the race may live. The world has thriven on the sufferings of those

who have loved it and given themselves for it. Every new truth which men have learned has been read in the blaze of martyr fires. Every great reform has been won at unreckonable cost. A Calvary is the tribute Freedom always claims from men. Every commercial privilege which an American enjoys was purchased on Golgotha. We are not our own; and that which we have is not ours. Every breath of our bodies and every opportunity of our hands, hearts, and brains was bought for us with immeasurable sacrifice. Our little lives are surcharged with the blood-bought wealth of the centuries; and not one of us, if we could live to the age of Methuselah, and held in our grasp the wealth of the continents, could begin to pay the future the debt we owe the past. Sacrifice is not life's accident, but life's law. No man has a moral right to live other than a sacrificial life in this world of sin and sacrifice. Lotze affirms that no life is moral which is not self-sacrificed in the service of others. No Christian is true to

his Christ, nor has grasped the meaning of the cross, who is not a vicarious sufferer for his fellow-men. The cross was not our release from, but our obligation to, sacrifice. And whenever there is a heart throbbing with the passion of Jesus there will be a life straitened till its mission be accomplished. Wherever there is a soul pulsing with the life of God there will always be sacrificial hands uplifting humanity to higher things.

Now, the reason this message of the cross has so much larger an application to men of wealth is that they have the larger opportunities and possessions to sacrifice. They have the weapons of love. Christ offers no different terms of discipleship to any American man of wealth than he offered to Matthew at his custom-table. The centuries have not bulged the needle's eye. It is as hard to enter now as when Christ mentioned its smallness to the rich Pharisees. Christ was infinitely pitiful to the weak, the poor, the thriftless, the sinful, the ignorant; but to those who sought to hallow covetousness

with religious forms, and convert piety into a cloak for greed, he had but wrath and scorn and scourges.

The simple fact of our industrial situation is that the men of wealth in our American churches can begin to solve our pressing social problems any time they choose, by simply being disciples of the Lord Christ. As the Father sent Christ into the world to sacrifice himself in the service of man, so Christ sends the corporation manager, the merchant, the mill owner, the mine operator, the street-railway president, to be a living sacrifice in the service of men. Christ was under no more obligation to consecrate himself wholly to the world-saving, man-uplifting business than every business man in America. The uniqueness of Christ's work has no bearing upon this fact. The claim of God to Christ's service is the claim that rests upon us all. The Lord did not die to give us an opportunity for self-seeking. We are not here on a vacation from God. He sends every man of wealth forth to be a

savior of his fellow-men; and the business man who fails to be a little Christ to the world has made a disastrous and irreparable business failure. A man of business has no more right to make personal profit the supreme purpose of his store, his shop, his capital, his factory, his railway, than Jesus had to work miracles for personal profit. We have no more moral right than our Lord to direct our social, domestic, or financial affairs for personal ends. The Christian has no more right to an unconsecrated horse, or house, or dress, than Christ to an unconsecrated cross. We are not our own; we are bought with a price; and nothing short of an unreserved surrender of self-interest to God's interest in humanity is moral or just. Not to be self-sacrificing in others' service is injustice. To be unloving, even to the unlovable, is to be ungodly.

The Christocratic Kingdom.

The day is coming when the homes, the shops, the stores, the social clubs, the newspapers, the corporations, the political caucuses, that have not for their sacred purpose the making of men divine will be regarded as out of place in a world that has been redeemed by the Son of God and nourished by the life-blood of his saints. There is no such thing as a secular affair in the universe of God. There is nothing but moral anarchy outside of the realm of God's authority. God recognizes nothing as having a right to exist apart from a vital relation to himself. There is no affair which engages human passions, brains, hearts, hands, that is not a religious matter. Nothing has a moral right to an existence on the earth which has any other basic purpose than the uplifting and sustaining of men in righteousness. The basing of commerce, or education, or politics, or society, on the modern atheistic and mercantile idea of secularity is an assumption

that violates the lesson of history, and is intolerable to the Scriptures. Christ is King! Unto him every knee shall bow. The freedom of the race is to be reached only through yielding to Christ's moral despotism. As President Valentine has said, "There is nothing under the stars that is not amenable to his authority." There are no exemptions provided for stock exchanges, or wholesale establishments, or railway corporations, or social leaders, or politicians, or teachers of natural sciences. Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. We have no moral right to dress simply with a view to pleasing ourselves; eat as we please; live in the kind of homes we please; ride in the carriages we please; have the company we please; buy the books, pictures, jewelry, luxuries we please—no more than Christ had.

I am aware that what I am saying is irritating to the practical, untheocratic age—an age which has small sense of the divineness of things. We have little practical use for

things we cannot buy or sell; things that do not minister to our bodily comfort and social pride. We are apt to measure even the religious value of men by their market value. We are willing enough that Christ should have been crucified for us, but are angered at the thought of being crucified for him. It is so much easier to worship Christ than go up and share with him his cross. It is so much easier to be obsequious in saying Lord, Lord, than it is to do the things he tells us; so much easier to subscribe to creeds and repeat rituals than renounce selfish ownership to one's possessions and deny one's self. But only a crucified Christianity will ever be able to win a selfish world to the crucified Christ. And there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby society and civilization can be saved. Not until the race shall have been crucified with Christ's crucifixion will it assemble with clasped hands and free spirits around the throne of the Lamb.

Men first quarreled with God, and they

have been quarreling with each other ever since. And the reconciliation of men to each other must proceed through their reconciliation to God as he is revealed in Christ. Social unity must be the result of God-one-ness and God-in-ness. It will be the outgrowth of the incarnation of the divine sacrificial Christ-life in the life of humanity. When men touch each other with the touch of God, and love each other with the love of God, and serve each other with the sacrificial heart of God, then the race will be one concordant family. The solvent of every problem of society is the love of God. And the cross is the weapon which God took from his own heart to break open our hearts that he might pour therein the life-renewing balm of his love. Our hope for social freedom will reach its fulfillment, not through social mechanisms, but through our acting, as Frederick Maurice says, "in the faith that the constraining love of Christ is the mightiest power in the universe." Society is to be saved by men and women who

shall pour their lives and possessions as streams of love and service into the great current of Christ's redeeming life, whose onflowing is healing the nations.

The Kingdom is at Hand.

The whole question of labor and capital, and all the problems of our day, can be restated in this form: Is the Gospel of Jesus livable? God is calling to-day for able men who are willing to be financially crucified in order to establish the world's market on a Golden Rule basis. He is calling for noble women who are willing to be socially crucified to make society the agency for uplifting instead of crushing the poor and ignorant and weak. "Whoever," says Benjamin Franklin, "introduces into the public affairs the principles of primitive Christianity will change the face of the world." It is for this work that God would anoint you, O Christian business men of America! History has never presented to man an opportunity richer than yours. You can make the mar-

ket as sacred as the church. You can make the whirl of industrial wheels like the joyous music of worship. You can be the knights of the noblest chivalry the world has ever seen; not going forth "to recover the tomb of a buried god," as Ruskin said of the crusaders of Richard Lionheart, but to fulfill the commands of the eternal Christ. And where you go, flowers of hope will spring in your footprints. You can bear the weak in your arms, and set the captives of poverty free. You can cause the deserts of human despair to blossom with the gladness of fulfilled prophecy, and hush the voices of discontent in the sweetness of fruitful toil. You can give work to the wageless; teach the thriftless and ignorant; seat the poor in the best pews of your churches. You need not strive nor cry, nor wear plumes and flaunt banners; but you can be the heralds of a new civilization, the creators of a Christian industry whose peaceful procession will reach around the globe. You need carry no crosses of wood or gold or silver; but you

can bury the cross of your Christ deep within your hearts and stretch forth consecrated hands to realize the life of humanity by upraising it into the idealism of Jesus. You can draw the world's trades and traffics within the onsweep of Christ's redemptive purpose. You can plant everlasting peace underneath the feet of men, so that there shall be no more strife; and light earth's night of toil with skies of love, so that there shall be no more night. You can be the makers of the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness; in which the race will be at last human because it is divine, and divine because it is human.

God's new day of judgment is surely and swiftly dawning. Voices from out the future are crying repentance unto this mammon-worshiping generation. The axe is laid at the root of the trees. New John Baptists are arising who will speak truth and justice to the Herods of finance, though their ecclesiastical heads be the price of the message.

In the lead of human progress I see the matchless figure of the Son of God—

"Toiling up new Calvaries ever with the cross that turns not back."

Behold the Lamb of God that beareth away the sin of the world. Let us close about him, O brother men, and keep step with the march of the cross!

"Till upon earth's grateful sod
Rests the city of our God."

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